

# Hackney Union

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 1990

## News

### HACKNEY WORKERS SUPPORT THE AMBULANCE WORKERS

Five months into their dispute ambulance workers are fighting on. They are not prepared to accept Kenneth Clarke's offer of a 9% pay award over 18 months. With inflation running at 8% they know this will not pay the bills.

We now have the situation of extremely caring people withdrawing their labour & knowing that this will cause some people to suffer. Meanwhile the Police & Army are scabbing by doing these workers jobs.

#### Tories ignore public opinion.

Opinion polls show that 90% of people support the ambulance workers but the Conservatives appear unwilling to listen. Even the largest ever Parliamentary petition, with 4,680,727 signatures, was ignored.

#### Massive local support.

In Hackney collections have been amazing with people running up to give. Thousands signed the petition & have sent protest letters to Kenneth Clarke.

#### We broke the Law on December 6th!

In addition whilst the strike on December 6th was not quite the success we had hoped for; it nevertheless saw thousands of workers taking secondary action in support of the ambulance workers & in defiance of the anti-trade union laws.

#### January 30th

Meanwhile the Joint Shop Stewards Committee has organised 'Hands Across Hackney' on Tuesday January 30th. Come along between 11am & 12 noon to help form a chain between Mare Street & Brooksby Walk ambulance stations.

#### Emergency numbers.

In case of emergency telephone the ambulance workers direct on 986-4003(Hackney), 985-4634 (Dalston) or 739-8555(Shoreditch)

#### Join the Support Group.

A Hackney Ambulance Workers Support Group has been set up & it meets 7.30 pm every Tuesday at the Unity Club in Dalston. Affiliation is £2 & £1.

Hackney Union News is produced in English & Turkish by workers at Hackney Trade Union Support Unit. The articles do not necessarily correspond to the views of the workers and are written in order to produce debate within the Trade Union Movement.

Articles, letters, comments & suggestions to:-HUN, 489 Kingsland Road E8. Tel:249-8086 or 249-6930. If you would like a regular copy let us know.

# BIRMINGHAM 6

## TRADE UNION CAMPAIGN

The recent release of the the so called 'Guildford 4' has again focused attention on the plight of the 6 Birmingham building workers convicted in 1975 of the pub bombings in the Midlands.

Despite serious doubts about the way they were questioned and the subsequent malpractices of the West Midlands Police, these 6 workers remain locked up in various prisons in England. There is now growing outrage amongst the labour movement at this.

### Union members.

All 6 men were trade unionists, three in UCATT and 3 in the TGWU. They were all from Irish backgrounds & their arrest and conviction created a climate of apprehension and fear amongst Irish workers in Britain.

### 'Official' support.

Nationally major trade unions such as UCATT, the TGWU and the National Union of Mineworkers all support the case. At the request of the TGWU the staff of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) prepared a report on the case for the TUC General Council.

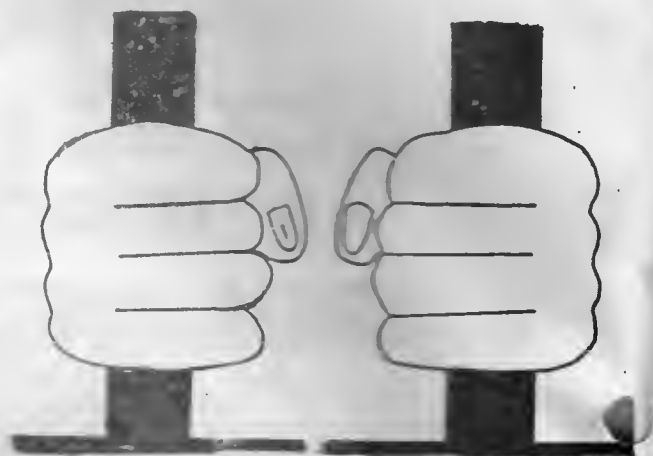
### Build grassroots support.

However we need to build strong local support as well, especially in trade unions, in order to keep the issue alive. Various Labour movement bodies have undertaken activities such as writing to the prisoners and/or raising cash for their families.

### You can help.

If you would like to help, or can arrange a speaker for your stewards committee, union branch or organisation, either contact us at TUSU or write to the 'National Campaign for the Birmingham 6', c/o 21 Hatchard Road, Holloway, London N19.

Val Veness.



POEM BY  
RICHARD MCILKENNY  
ONE OF THE BIRMINGHAM 6

WHAT PRICE JUSTICE FOR THE INNOCENTS  
LOCKED UP IN PRISON CELLS  
WHAT PRICE RESPECT AND PEACE OF MIND  
FOR THOSE WHO KNOW AND WILL NOT TELL  
WHAT PRICE THE HORROR OF THE BEATINGS  
THE TORTURE AND THE CRIES  
OF HONEST MEN WHO IN TERROR SIGNED  
PERVERTED STATEMENTS FILLED WITH LIES  
WHAT PRICE HUNGER AND DEPRIVATION  
THREATS WITH STICKS AND CRUEL DOGS  
OF MINDS NOW BLOWN AND MADDENED  
AS IF LOST WITH NO SOUL  
WHAT PRICE THE LOSS OF LIVES AND CHILDREN  
OF FAMILIES TORN ASIDE  
WHOSE MOANS AND WHISPERS OF ANGUISH COME  
FROM DEEP WOUNDED HEARTS  
WHAT PRICE THE LONG LOST YEARS FILLED  
WITH LONGINGS AND PAIN AND THE LONGING  
TO BE HELD IN LOVING ARMS AGAIN  
WHAT PRICE THE LOST LOVE AND JOY OF CHILDREN  
ALL NOW FULLY GROWN, LEFT WITHOUT A FATHER  
NOW WITH CHILDREN OF THEIR OWN  
WHAT PRICE WHAT PRICE !!  
WHAT PRICE FOR HONESTY AND TRUTHFULNESS  
FOR DIGNITY AND PRIDE RESTORED  
FOR THE INNOCENTS TO BE SET FREE  
EXONERATED AND RECOMPENSED  
TO REJOIN SOCIETY ONCE MORE

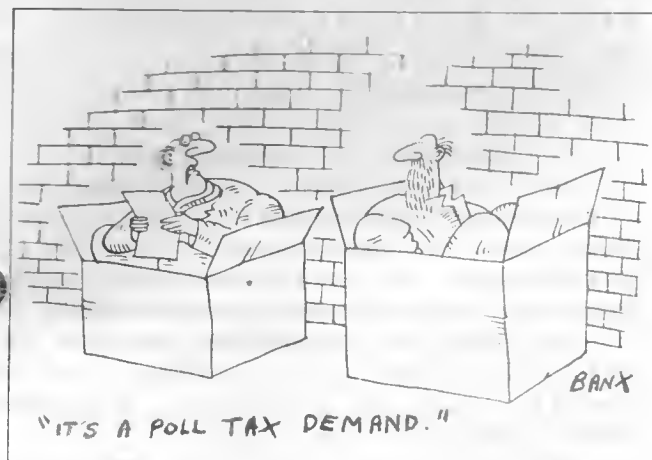
DICK

# THE POLL TAX CREEPS CLOSER

One year after its introduction in Scotland the Government wants on April Fool's Day 1990 to introduce in England & Wales a community charge-or Poll Tax- for local services, a new national business rate and a new system of central government funding of local councils.

## Poor to suffer.

Under the poll tax almost all adults in a borough will pay the same for their local services. Whether you earn £7,500 per annum or £75,000 you will pay exactly the same. There will therefore be a redistribution of wealth from the poor to the wealthy. Even those on the dole will be expected to pay up to £3 a week from their £30 a week benefit.



## Poll Tax rate to vary widely.

The actual rate will vary from borough to borough. The highest spending boroughs are mainly inner city areas or industrial towns which need the the kind of services councils provide: schools, council housing, sports & community centres, home helps etc. They will have the biggest Poll Tax bills. The electorate in these areas largely vote Labour. The lowest spending councils are the more affluent, mainly Conservative, areas.

## But what will I have to pay?

No-one is really sure. For example Government figures for Hackney estimate £311 per person but this ignores the rate of inflation, the likelihood of some people not paying & the councils debt's. In addition the Council still doesn't know what it will get from the National Business rate as the Government hasn't announced the figure. (see later)

As of late December Hackney Council has not announced its Poll Tax figure but anything under £400 per person will be a major surprise.

## Council workers under attack.

Faced with a huge bill many people will ask how the Tax can be reduced. The Government's response appears to be one of arguing that council spending should be reduced. Thus instead of paying council workers the going rate the argument will be to cut their wages & conditions of services. Better still privatise as much as possible, sell off council housing to a private landlord etc,etc

## Accountability reduced.

It is claimed by the Government that the poll tax will increase local accountability because people will begin to realise the value of their services and decide whether they are prepared to pay for them.

However under the new legislation only 25% of local spending-the Poll Tax-can be raised locally. Thus 75% of council spending will be determined centrally. This is because the Government has taken away local councils rights to set the business rate. The new National Business Rate will be set by the Government & redistributed to councils on a population basis.

# THE POLL TAX CREEPS CLOSER

Councils who feel that the sum they obtain isn't enough & decide to increase their poll tax figure will find themselves 'capped' and told to alter their budgets.

## Civil Liberties attacked.

The Poll Tax will further transform local government in to local administration as they will have even less control over spending.

In addition because councils will need to know where everyone lives there will be a need for a central, constantly updated register. Nicholas Ridley admitted that an army of snoopers will be needed.

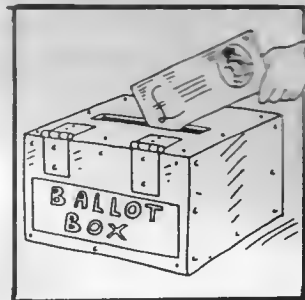
## Scotland.

In Scotland by January the Tax will have been operating 10 months. Government figures (Nov 1989) show that 600,000 have made no payment & 500,000 are in serious arrears. Meanwhile in Strathclyde 300,000 people have 'disappeared' from the electoral register. These people are not in the Governments figures.



## Resistance stops baliff's.

Whilst the Government has made plans, where necessary, to take the Tax directly from someones wage or benefit this is not always possible. When this happens the baliff's enter a persons house & take household items away. Community resistance has stopped them every time it has been tried in Scotland.



## Alternatives.

Many Anti-Poll Tax Unions & Federations have been formed in England, Scotland & Wales. (The Tax doesn't apply to N.Ireland) These have varying views:-

1. Don't register in order to make it difficult to councils to compile a register.
2. Council's should not collect the Tax.
3. No Trade unionist should co-operate in any way with the operating of the Tax.
4. Register but don't pay.
5. Strike action by all workers.
6. Protest against the unfairness of the Tax but Councils should collect it and people should pay it.
7. Vote Labour at the next election in the hope that they get rid of it. (At this time Labour opposes the Tax but has no alternative policy.)

## What are your views?

As we move towards April should the Poll Tax be opposed and, if so, how? Write & let us know & we will print your views & ideas. Keep letters to 150-200 words please.

# INTERNATIONAL: IRAN

Iran's population has grown from 37 million in the late 70's to almost 49 million today. This gives it the second largest population growth rate in the World after Nigeria.

Workers, rather than peasants, constitute the majority of the population & are employed mainly in oil, copper, coal industries, brick yards, shoe factories and heavy industries such as car manufacturing, steel...

## February 1979 uprising.

It was the two years of bloody protest and the major oil strike which finally overthrew the Shah. Workers formed Shoras (councils) but as the Islamic Republic came to power they smashed them and replaced them with Islamic ones. Marches by the unemployed in support of jobs & by women against the compulsory veil were confronted by gunfire.

## The Labour Laws.

The new government retained the Shah's labour code & only after huge protests were they forced to draft a new code. This was done four times & whilst the final draft included some of the workers demands such as two-days off per week, equal pay it did not include the right to strike and to organise. However even this was rejected by Parliament and the workers in Iran have almost no legal protection.

## Rafsanjani's 5 year plan.

The Iran-Iraq war was a blessing for the Islamic Republic but it brought homelessness, hunger, destitution, high unemployment, high prices & suppression for the working class.

Since the cease-fire the regime has been trying to take the form of a 'normal' government. After 18 months of empty promises Rafsanjani has introduced his five year plan. Workers are to take the brunt again by "making more sacrifices."



The plan dashes any hope for the 4 to 5 million unemployed and calls for "higher and more efficient productivity." Money would be provided either through 'privatisation' or by government loan schemes where "foreign and national investors are invited to capitalise."

## Continued arms spending.

The plan also suggests that "since there is always the threat of war, we should spend a part of the social welfare budget on defence." The five years of misery planned for the workers is certain to lead to massive protests and possibly revolution.

## Support Iranian workers.

In June 1989 the Iranian Labour Solidarity Campaign was set up by the Iranian workers taking refuge abroad. It aims to inform workers of other countries of the current situation of Iranian workers & to gain support for their struggle. It has also been supporting the struggles of workers in other countries. For more details contact us at the address below.

Written by a member of:-Iranian Labour Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 1333, London WC1N 3XX.

Hackney Union News will be publishing an International Page in its next few issues. If you interested in contributing an article then please phone Mark on 249-6930.



# PENSIONERS FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS



In 1989 Hackney Pensioners Convention campaigned around the Pension, Safe Travel, Community Care & the NHS, benefits, free TV licences & no standing charges.

## Bus pass success.

With regard to the travel permit we collected 12,000 names for the London Petition, lobbied Hackney Council & were part of a London deputation to the Committee on Accessible Transport.

Our efforts ensured that our permits were re-issued without Means testing, without more restrictions & without charge—a major success! Any worker retiring before April 1992 will get free travel on buses & tubes, with concessions on Green Line & rail services.

## Increase the pension.

We are now supporting the Campaign by British pensioners for a state retirement pension of £75 a week. This is roughly the average pension paid in Europe & is in line with the labour movement demand for a pension equal to one-third of average male industrial earnings.

We have prepared a petition for general public support and a sample resolution for Trade Union & Labour Party branches, with the aim of influencing the 1990 TUC & Labour Party Conferences. The campaign's success can help ensure a decent retirement for pensioners of today & tomorrow.

## Oppose plans for the NHS.

While this will be our main activity in 1990 we will also fight the 'Opting out' plans of local hospitals from the NHS & the plans to pass over Community Care to the Borough Council without the necessary resources.

We aim to convince Pensioners to use the Council Elections as a massive protest vote against Government Policies that have been, and are, so detrimental to pensioners.

## Contact.

For details, resolutions & petitions contact H.Mundy at 34 Dalston Lane E8.

Harry Mundy.

# END BUILDING SITE DEATHS

The Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) won another battle in the fight to end deaths in the industry as thousands of angry building workers quit work for the day to join the Campaign's mass lobby of Parliament on October 19th. Around 800 workers, 30 Labour MP's and officials from a range of unions also attended meetings in the House of Commons.

## Action demanded.

The industry's atrocious health & safety record was condemned & there were calls for heavier fines on employers & heavy prison sentences in cases of negligence.

Campaign speakers declared that the only way to get safe working conditions was through strong trade union organisation & by having the right to stop the job without fear of victimisation.

## Building firms sponsor Tories.

Michael Meacher MP pointed to the building firms donations to the Tories & accused them of ignoring the growing death toll.

Later however Employment Minister Pat Nicholls press statement claimed that things had improved as more bosses were being prosecuted, fines were becoming heavier & workers who thought site conditions unsafe could stop the job & call the Health and Safety Executive.

## Health & Safety Executive; weak and ineffective.

In fact the HSE have only 90 construction inspectors for 16,000 sites and last year 92% of reported accidents did not even merit an inspector's site visit. In London last year there were 37 deaths & 413 major injuries & yet there were only 18 prosecutions. The average fine was only £1050.

## Deaths ignored.

Tony O'Brien, CSC secretary, said that; "building workers are being killed on site at the rate of 3 a week..... there is a conspiracy of silence... the public aren't being told the truth."

By Fiona Murie.



## For example: Paul Elvin.

Campaign supporter Anne Elvin agreed. Her son Paul, a window fitter was killed in November 1988 whilst working at Euston Station. The aluminium pole he was carrying touched a 25,000 volt overhead cable, and Paul died 20 hours later. It was his first day on the job & he had received no safety training. Anne commented that, "we feel that Paul has been murdered, legally."

## Labour Party support pledged.

Labour MP's pledged a new Bill on construction safety. Dave Nellist MP, chair of the meeting, announced: "this lobby is the start of the campaign to put construction safety at the top of the political agenda."

## Contact

CSC secretary Tony O'Brien at 72 Copeland Road, London SE16 or phone 732-3711. Locally contact Mick Holder on 986-0017.

## APOLOGY

We have been asked to point out that in the last copy of Hackney Union News there was a picture of a worker in a local clothing sweatshop. The person pictured would like it to be known that he has no association whatsoever with Hackney Trade Union Support Unit or the factory pictured.

# TRADE UNIONS FIGHT DEPORTATIONS

Over 250 people are deported every month. Here we highlight 2 local union members under threat of deportation & argue that we should fight the immigration laws that bring about such threats.

**NALGO member GEORGINA ADDAI** has lived & worked in Hackney for 6 years having originally come to Britain from Ghana to live with her husband & 2 year old son. The Council employed her as a social worker for people with learning difficulties & people with physical disabilities.

In 1986 her husband left her but she was granted a visa on a 6 monthly basis for the next 2 years. However in 1988 the Home Office refused to make any further visa renewals. Hackney Council applied for a work permit on Georgina's behalf but in 1989 the Home Office informed her that they had considered her case and had decided to deport her- she is now appealing against this.

## Union support.

NALGO along with tenants, carers, parents & community groups are actively supporting Georgina's right to stay.



**JULIUS ALEXANDER** is a member of the Hackney TGWU/ACTSS branch. Despite having a British passport his original entry application to Britain was refused in 1975. In 1979 when St. Vincent was granted independence this passport was removed & thus when he finally came to Britain in 1984 it was as a visitor.

He was allowed an extension of 6 months to his 2 month stay but by April 1985 he was classified as an "overstayer". By this time Julius had a baby daughter and at present his partner, Maureen, a British citizen, is pregnant.

## Immigration Police break law.

Immigration police arrested him whilst he was working as a cook at North Middlesex Hospital. He was refused legal representation & made to sign a statement of guilt. His employers sacked him.

## Judges support police actions.

Despite having no powers to do so an immigration officer issued him with a deportation order. An appeal against this was rejected by the adjudicator. If this decision stands it will further increase immigration officials powers. Julius/Maureen have now been granted a Judicial Review.

## Fight these laws.

Many people are faced with the threat of deportation. It is vital that Trade Unionists challenge all immigration laws. These laws attempt to divide us by blaming the problems that we all face, such as unemployment & deprivation, on black people. If we are allowed to be divided then the strength of the trade union movement is undermined.

For further details contact:-  
NALGO (Georgina) on 985-7134 or  
Hackney TGWU/ACTSS (Julius Alexander) on 249-6930 or Workers Against Racism on 375-1702.